supply of hard coke to the Hindustan Zinc Ltd., Udaipur Rajasthan;

(b) if so, the details of the supply of low grade hard coke going on for the last eight years;

(c) the action being taken/had been taken to bring the culprits to book; and

(d) the details of the assessed loss suffered by Government on account of such bungling?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (d) No, Sir. However, Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) has reported that some procedural lapses have been detected in supply of coke for the Lead Smelter, Tundoo (Dhanbad). The Company has informed that the following remedial measures have been taken:—

(i) A procedural order has been issued streamlining the system so that such procedural lapses may not recur in future.

(ii) One officer has been suspended and three officers have been chargesheeted.

Cost Reduction Measures Adopted by SAIL

2453. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether SAIL have initiated cost reduction measures to overcome its financial burden and to mobilise additional resources for modernisation of its plants;

(b) if so, the details of measures taken in this regard;

(c) whether the SAIL propose to have joint venture with some MNCs to bring down losses of each plants; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) Since 1997-98, SAIL had put greater thrust on cost control by bringing operational efficiency and reducing administrative expenses, resulting in savings of about Rs. 700 crores in 1997-98 in areas like use of coking coal, stores & spares, power & fuel, improvement in techno-economic & productivity parameters and administrative expenses etc. Plans have been drawn for further cost saving during 1998-99.

(c) and (d) SAIL plans to formulate subsidiary companies/joint ventures for non-core areas. However, this is in preliminary stage.

Funds to Modernise IISCO

2454. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item "Indo-Russian Panel suggests use of ESCROW funds to modernise IISCO" in the Financial Express, dated 2nd December, 1998; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto and the present status of the revival of IISCO through the joint venture between SAIL and T.P.E., Moscow?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) In the 5th Session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission, held in November, 1998, in Moscow, it was, inter-alia, agreed to between the two sides that they would work towards reconstruction/modernisation of The Indian Iron & Steel Company Limited (IISCO) through a Joint Venture between Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and Tyazhpromexport (TPE). The modalities, to make this operational, have been initiated.